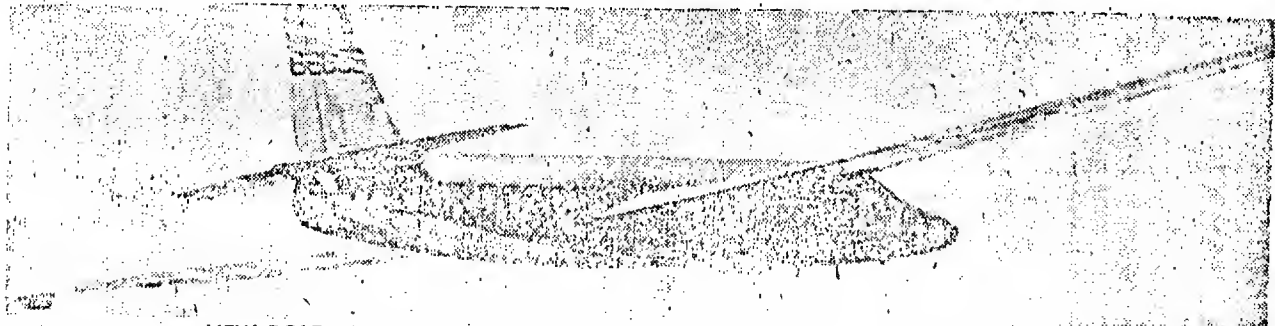


NEW YORK
JOURNAL AMERICAN

APR 5 1964

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OAS TO REDS IN CARIBBEAN: 'CHECKMATE!'



NEW ROLE FOR FAMED U-2 RECONNAISSANCE PLANE IN THE CARIBBEAN?

By DAN BRIGHAM

It's called "Operation Bird Dog," and its very existence may be denied. But in the past 23 days it has cost the Communist strategists in Cuba a total of 47 arms shipments across the Caribbean (some captured, some jettisoned), 14 souped-up "trawlers," 91 crew arrests and incalculable Latin-American "face." (Even restless peasantry sneers at failure.)

It is a new phase in U.S.-South American military cooperation under Organization of American States joint military defense planning, as exemplified in recent combined annual Caribbean maneuvers such as "Pine-tree," and "Swift Strike."

It apparently worked right up to the threshold of the Presidential Palace in Brasilia, inland capital of Brazil. There a beleaguered President Joao Goulart waited vainly for a promised "rescue operation" from Cuba reminiscent of the Nazi's snatch of Mussolini from his rebel Italian captors in World War II.

It is a "Tinker-to-Evans-to-Chance" round-the-clock double-play combination of U.S. U-2 surveillance (complete with computer-coordination) and Latin Air Forces, Navy, Army and local police cooperation, long since perfected to defend the South American continent against "foreign aggression," and guerrilla penetration.

It is only "coincidental" that Operation Bird Dog's facilities make it extremely adaptable to combatting subversive conditions with guerilla overtones, my informants say.

But it is working out perhaps better than its developers had reason to hope when advance warning

of a new Communist attempt at coordinated take-overs in Venezuela and Colombia, timed to coincide with a Brazilian "upset," was intercepted by U.S. intelligence and relayed to the general staffs of all three countries—through MILITARY, not diplomatic channels.

Communications coordination between the military was quickly achieved in tactical conferences at attaché-level in Washington's OAS headquarters. Strategy was ironed out at planning-board level "elsewhere," and Operation Bird Dog emerged about as follows:

That the U.S. with its high altitude reconnaissance capabilities (U-2 . . . and "other") would "bird-dog" Caribbean surface and air movements to determine "patterns."

This would include suspicious movements of small vessels near or in vulnerable territorial waters where frequent arms shipments have recently been made to isolated beaches for local underground movements.

Intercept—and military countermeasures "if any"—was to be the responsibility of the native military and civilian police establishments involved. Biggest hauls were made in the first 11 days, according to my informants, before the Reds got wise to the idea that "something was wrong."

The Goulart "rescue" attempt? Two Russian-built Ilyushin turbo-prop transports (near 450-mph aircraft at full blast) reportedly left Havana late Tuesday, swung east of the Antilles at near wave-top level and headed south toward Recife, Brazil.

Observers' suspicions were aroused (and confirmed by intelligence) that the destination was Brasilia: the mission—"rescue." The planes "wore" tropic camouflage. They were turned back by Brazilian jet interceptors alerted—through military channels—by Bird Dog.